

# Pennsylvania Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities Research and Epidemiology



The Children's Health Act of 2000 directed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to establish regional centers for autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) and other developmental disabilities (DDs). CDC is now funding **Centers for Autism and Developmental Disabilities Research and Epidemiology (CADDREs)** in California, Colorado, Maryland, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. In Georgia, CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities at CDC leads the sixth CADDRE program. The three goals of these centers are to conduct center-initiated special studies, to design and conduct a multisite study of causes and risk factors for ASDs, and to disseminate findings to increase public health awareness. For information about CADDRE, please visit the CDC website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/caddre>.



The University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities Research and Epidemiology is the CADDRE site studying ASDs in Pennsylvania in the counties of Philadelphia, Chester, and Montgomery. The PA-CADDRE has three major initiatives:

## *Study to Explore Early Development (SEED)*

In this study, the center will work with other CADDRE programs to find causes of ASDs or factors that make it more likely that a child will have an ASD. Families who take part in SEED will answer survey questions and provide biological samples, children will be given developmental tests and physical examinations, and staff will look at medical records. Approximately 2700 children 2 through 5 years of age and their parents are expected to participate in this multisite study. Children with an ASD will be compared with a random sample of children from the general population, and a sample of children with other neurodevelopmental problems. SEED is the largest national study of ASDs in Pennsylvania to date.

## *Special Studies*

As part of PA-CADDRE's initiative to increase early identification of autism and DDs, the program is introducing health care providers to the use of a standardized autism screening tool for children 15 through 30 months of age. The first phase of the training program was administered to health care providers at urban primary care pediatric practices staffed by physicians, professional nurses, and nursing assistants.

## *Sharing Information*

PA-CADDRE plans to share information with nurses, physicians, educators, and other providers of health and educational services to improve public and professional awareness of ASDs and ASD screening and early referral. Information will be shared through mailings to parents, support groups, and the media; scientific publications; and presentations to parents and other professionals. A research registry, currently under development, will link families with researchers.

## *For further information, please contact:*

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